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# THE

# CLASSICAL POETS OF GUJARAT,

AND

# Their Influence on Society and Morals.

BY

GOVARDHANRAM MADHAVRAM TRIPATHI, B.A., LL.B.,

Pleader, High Court, Bombay.

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"Jyan na p-hoché ravi, tyán p-hoché kavi."

("The poet finds access where the sun does not.")

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# PREFACE.

This paper was prepared for and read in 1892 efore the Wilson College Literary Society. It is he first contribution of its kind to the literature of he subject with which it deals. It attempts to pply the historical method of criticism to the study f the Gujarati poets. There are evident reasons r shortcomings in such a treatment of this sub- ct. But in spite of all difficulties it may be pre- icted that future labourers in this field will not nd their task hopeless. The longer poems usually ad with a statement of the dates of their composi- on and short notices of their authors. Although the ead notes in the volumes of the Kávya-dohana to the dates, &c., of the poets are based on adition and may not be accurate, the poems them- es supply intrinsic evidence of the approximate ectness of the dates generally. The introduc- s and notes to the publications of the Baroda e throw very valuable light on several matters. hear of further inquiries being undertaken in r quarters. When we take up these results by side with the history of Gujarat and of gious upheavals in that country, we can discover key-notes of the poetry that has been sung there ivers times and under varying circumstances. attempt made in this direction in this paper is ssarily a crude one, and it only claims to be a inning upon which others may improve hereafter.

The paper also deals with the influence of the ts on society and morals. This is a most

delicate and difficult subject to reach, especially in our present stage of historical ignorance. But we are not altogether wanting in materials. Once we are able to arrange and understand the historical strata of Gujarati poetry, the next work would be to decipher the secrets of social conditions imbedded therein. Connect the results of this process by the light of the history of Gujarat as also of the whole of which it forms but a fraction in different aspects, and we arrive at information of no mean value. If we can add to this an acquaintance with the actual social and domestic conditions of the people among whom the poets lived and sang, we may be able to realize the latest evolutions of the influence of the poets by comparing the present with the recent past, and that past with its predecessor and so on, until we are able, by putting together link after link of the progress of ages, to form a conception of some whole.

The pursuit of a method of this kind must ever be a work of time and energy. The writer of the present paper is fully alive to the defects in the application of this method as also to the poorness of the results of his small labours. But, in matters like these, one may plead an exception to the rule that he who professes to edify readers must first be fully edified himself. The exception may apply when one writes with the humble object of inviting co-operation and inspiring fellow-labourers. The attainment of such an aim can hardly be despaired of in these days of University education.

G. M. T.

1*st June*, 1894.

# THE CLASSICAL POETS OF GUJARAT, AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON SOCIETY AND MORALS.

In a paper on the classical poets of Gujarat one cannot promise any such glowing picture as may be drawn by one dealing with the poets of any of the great languages of the world. The poets of Gujarat have had, like their country, very hard times for themselves, and their themes have had a circumscribed field. All that can be said of them is that within this narrow field they have done the work of poets. The wonder is not that they have done so little, but that they have done anything at all. It may be asked—Why is this so? The answer to this question is a necessary part of my subject, because it will enable me to go through a little of the unknown history of the people of Gujarat, and to tell you how their life and vicissitudes are related to their poets.

Gujarati, as it is spoken now, is not a very ancient vernacular. Coins and inscriptions are said not to show Gujarati in its modern form before the period of the Solanki dynasty. The language in its first stages of growth is traced back to a few centuries before the establishment of Mahomedan dynasties in Gujarat, and it appears to have been fully developed when the Mahomedans came. When Kathiawar was overrun by Rajputs from Rajputana, the natives maintained or acquired a political status and importance, as the rulers and the ruled were

both Hindus, and local politics became all-in-all. The language of the ruled, as after the Norman conquest in England, devoured the language of the rulers and became the language of the Court, and the importance given to politics made its poetry sink into a nonentity. But it was otherwise in what we call Gujarat proper as distinguished from the land of the Scythian Kathis. The Mahomedan Sultans who came to rule in this part no doubt allowed political advancement to several individual Hindus; but it was not allowed to the Hindu subjects as a whole or in any general way. There were usually no powerful Rajputs to maintain a poetry of chivalry and war, and the Hindus had nothing but their houses and industries to themselves. Agriculture was practised, as at present, by people of particular illiterate castes, who had to work hard for bread in the midst of robbery and official oppression, from which neither the Sultans nor the Imperial Viceroys could save them. Poetry, the offspring of leisure, was thus left to spring up among the home-keeping classes round domestic hearths, in temples, and in social and religious gatherings, that is, in towns and villages, and not in the open country. The Mahrattas succeeded the Mahomedans and even their rule was not characterized by any better conscience or policy so far as the natives of the province were concerned. But the advent of the Mahrattas was also the means of a more permanent blow to Gujarat. Like some innocent birds which nestle in some quiet regions where no rude hands might disturb them, the literary men of Gujarat had begun their great works in those very

towns and villages where the Mahrattas were destined to come, but where, till then, there where seclusion and peace and quiet. Baroda itself was the place where the greater of the two greatest of our poets had been thus bringing up a rare garden of literature, and this was the place which the new invaders selected for their principality. This promising and hopeful garden was blasted at their approach. But Baroda was not the whole of Gujarat. Outside this town, which was transformed from the residence of poets into the centre of political activity and intrigue, there was the large mofussil which the new invaders did not care for, except for the collection of revenues. Here, left to themselves, the landholders and merchants, though illiterate and unable to sing, formed a good market where a demand for poetry of some kind could be created, for they had money as well as their own latent poetry of life, and the man was wanted that could elate and gratify their souls. Woman, too, in Gujarat has not been a silent factor in society. She would listen to song, and, if possible, would join in a good song. In what way have all these souls created a poetry?

It has been frequently noted that religions grow up like mushrooms in Gujarat. This is a fact, and is a result of the political extinction to which the province was reduced by the constant emigrations of the Rajputs and other political classes leaving behind a residue of unwarlike and home-keeping population which sought refuge in religion from the oppressions and anarchies

which they were unable to cope with by any other means. People here have thus had their own views and vicissitudes of life, and are predisposed to listen to all that might soothe and console or elate. Each locality has thus its own traditions, and is ready to have them incorporated in some myths and fictions. Some clever man who has thus felt the pulse of the folk in a town or village, finds it easy to set up a suitable religion for them, for religion is often a mixture of poetry and philosophy. There is no wonder that a supply of poets should have at all times existed in a land, the only history of whose people for at least a couple of centuries has consisted of vicissitudes and of sentiments as the only relief from their nightmares. But, as said, the very reasons which created the poetry of the land, also confined its themes to religion. While poetry and religion thus grew up in a condition of reciprocal engraftment, the fact is noteworthy that many a poet there has been who in all likelihood thought he was simply developing his religious ideas, when in fact he was unconsciously singing out the poetry of his heart. And whether he was singing in the service of the temple or of his philosophy, he oftentimes unravelled the mysteries from within the depths of his own heart, or reflected what was felt by his family and friends. Thus have the poets of Gujarat seldom sung about mountains and meadowlands or about patriotism and war. They have neither seen nor praised any living kings and courtiers, for they have never been in touch with them. Industrious and peaceful, they were usually a home-keeping people with homely wits. They

generally knew no more; but this much is certain that they were conscious of the intense charm and beauty that spread a network of magic over their little homes and dear families. And though they knew no more, that which they knew and felt was turned to excellent account in their poems. He who would understand a classical poet of Gujarat must start upon this ground alone and none else. He must take it as his axiom that his poet is addressing his own surroundings and not the literary and refined world where European and Sanskrit poets found themselves. Such is the key to the poetry of Gujarat, and any one who is disposed to unlock the treasures of our poets must, in the first instance, learn to understand and appreciate what in Gujarat, the Brahman, the Banya, the ascetic, and even the woman is used to treasure up deep within his or her heart, and communicates only to those whom he or she loves or regards as one of his or her own fold.

The Gujarati poets are many in number. Only a few of them are placed before the public through the printing press, and their number amounts to about seventy. Eight of these belong to Kathiawar, fifteen to the city of Baroda, and the rest are scattered over different parts of what we now call the Districts of Surat, Broach, Kaira, and Ahmedabad, and over the other outlying provinces forming parts of Baroda and other petty States. Six of the poets are ladies, nine are Banyas, six Kunbis, seven Artisans, nine Sadhus or ascetics, four Jain priests, one a Maratha bastard, and all the rest are

Brahmans of different sections. Poetry so written may be studied from an anthropological point of view, and such a study, though it is likely to repay the labour, is not the object of this paper. Four of the seventy names belong to the fifteenth century, three to the sixteenth, eleven to the seventeenth, sixteen to the eighteenth, and twelve to the nineteenth. The period to which the good many names that remain, must belong cannot be ascertained, but it is clear from intrinsic evidence that they belong to the 18th and 19th centuries. This is of course a very rough outline. I exclude the whole of unpublished poetry as also the present generation of writers of poetry from this paper. I treat only of those whose names and poems have sufficiently outlived their local and contemporary fame and whose writings are now looked upon as classical. The comparative figures are above given to show that poetry here knows of no sex or caste. There is no part of India where caste-distinctions are so sharp and subtle as in Gujarat. And yet even here the distinctions vanish when we move in the regions of poetry and religion. In these two matters the people are prepared to honour and love all castes and to receive their gifts from all hands promiscuously. If a lady in Gujarat sings with the divine powers of a poet, the proudest man he could to forget that she is one of the sex over which he is accustomed to rule and he has simply to think that she is his mother. If it is a Banya or Kunbi who subdues the heart of the proud Brahman with his poetry, the Brahman has only to think that caste distinctions are confined to matters of food and

drink, and that the human soul is never contami-
nated by the body being that of an inferior caste.

Knowledge and religion and poetry were exclusive
and endogenous in India in early days when neither
the religion nor the poetry of the Veda and the sub-
sequent literature could be taken from or given to
others than the sacerdotal communities. But Bud-
dhism made the first wide breach in this Chinese
wall; when Buddhism itself was driven away to
China, Japan and Ceylon, the breach was retained
and enlarged through a clever compromise. The
religion of the Veda was restored as an external
raiment, but the individual that put it on had a
different soul within his frame and different features
under the raiment. When Brahmanism recovered
ground on the ruins of Buddhism, it ceased to draw its
actual religion from the Vedic sacrifice and rituals.
It constructed two new religions under the mask of
the old Vedic religion. The one religion was for the
learned few, and the other was for the masses. The
great and powerful Sankaracharya was the pioneer
of the former, and started a religion of asceticism
and philosophy, and he professed to base it on the
archaic philosophy of Vyas and of the Upanishads.
But while this was so done, it may equally be said
that his philosophy assimilated so much of the spirit
of Buddhism within itself that his Brahmanic
enemies taunted him with the epithet of "the
disguised Buddha." One result of this assimilation
was that unlike the Upanishads, his philosophy was
thrown open to all people and all castes, and even
to this day, instances are not unknown of Kunbis

and Banyas, who become ascetics and study h philosophy and even preach it to Brahmans.

At the same time the religion that was avowed constructed for the masses not possessing t necessary Sádhanas or means to realize t Brahma of Sankara, was Vedic by a fiction on and opened its gates to all shades of castes a beliefs. Sir Henry Maine has shown how, another branch of human literature, archaic cor munities have progressed by the help of fictio I refer to his work on ancient law and to his obser tions on Legal Fictions. The Romans, the Hindu and even the English lawyers have devised leg fictions to attain progress in societies and und conditions which did not brook an open violation existing belief. There has been a similar procedu and a similar use of fictions in order to make religio changes and advance in this country. The orthod people dislike the idea of giving up any old state things and the advanced party wish the contrary. T conflict exists between fathers and sons, husbands a wives. The problem was solved among Christi nations by carrying the conflict to the bitter en and we know how, in France, for instance, famili were divided as between their own members matters of religion and carried on internecine wa to get rid of the situation. In India the proced adopted was peaceful and tended to preserve harm The orthodox party is allowed to entertain belief that old things are not disturbed, the adv ed party is allowed to disturb the old state of thi and to introduce new things *as a fact*, and all still

fictitiously acknowledging that nothing new has opened, nd it is this acknowledgment that constitutes the *fiction* of the fact. In religion and cial matters, as in law, Indians have progressed the help of such fictions. The Hindu that opts a son introduces a stranger into his family a fact, and the fiction is that he persists in calling n his own son. The Brahman is enjoined to apply cred ashes to his forehead on certain occasions, d yet, if necessary, he may do without them and ply water to his forehead and call it ashes. He s to bathe with real water for some purposes, d yet, if necessary, he may bathe with the air and l it a water-bath. He may make a gift of cows simply giving a pice to the Brahman. Animals re killed with the sword at certain sacrifices, and, ce the days of the Jains, certain fruits are cut ough with the sword and the animal is taken to ve been killed. The Prayaschitta or Penance beigs also to this category of fictions. Similarly, er the fall of Buddhism the whole country reunded with cries of the revival of the Vedic religion, le, in fact, Buddhism was replaced by a system ich was a new organism and reform in every cept this, *viz.*, that the reformers helped lusion and fiction by drawing imistic literature and tradi- the names and romances and had to engraft upon their own s. This satisfied orthodox cravings and, to the heretic Buddhists into this new cobweb, onflict with the social and moral innovations of dhism was carefully avoided, and these innova-

tions were retained and even cherished in the r
system. Even Buddha himself, the very enemy
the Veda, was given place in the new pantheon
the masses and allowed to be worshipped as
Avatar of Vishnu!

The majority of Gujarati poets have felt the fla
of this new system, and a proper appreciation
that flame is a necessary introduction to th
poetry. It is no less instructive than interesting
see how these poets have received this flame, a
how they have fanned it.

The soul and spirit of this new religion was Bha
—a word which, with its numerous associatio
has no English word for it. Worship, prayer, s
even devotion are words which fall short of the
connotation of Bhakti. It means standing in
presence of God, serving Him, loving Him, be
loved by Him, talking to Him, seeing Him, hear
Him, and in fact enjoying the Deity. But how
this to be done? How to love and enjoy an Intan
ble Deity? It was answered that the love
the enjoyment were only the highest ideals of th
namesakes in man's own house. God is neit
man nor woman, and yet he is both
and everywhere. Man w
begin with forming hum
love grew abstract and hi
from human things. Did
as to his own friend and br er? D
want to talk her little things to Him as to
mother or to her child? Did she want to pou
heart to Him as to her husband and to pour he

on Him? The new religion supplied all these wants, and in every case man and woman found God exactly as he or she wanted Him to be. The only condition upon which this supply was meted out as free and absolute Bhakti, and Bhakti was, for alike the Vedic modes of salvation, open to all castes and grades of society. On the common ground of Bhakti the highest Brahman met with the lowest Dhed and Mhar, and against a religion so constituted the abstract conditions of Buddhism could offer no charms; for the only concrete charms of Buddhism were fully incorporated in this new faith, with very valuable additions. Austere morality, if not [illegible], was a condition of the Buddhistic faith. [illegible]oral man was an outcaste, who could attain [illegible]a only after a life of repentant humiliation [illegible]erities. But the lover of Bhakti had not [illegible]difficult or contemptible lot. It would no[illegible]e good—good in itself and good for the [illegible]g up of Bhakti—if the Bhakta had a moral sense; [illegible]orality was not his indispensable condition; as [illegible]was a merely social appendage of the physical [illegible]morality was no less a mere social institution. [illegible]e Bhakta may live in the midst of his institutions [illegible]d yet attain the felicity of Bhakti. When he [illegible]s realised the ideal of Bhakti, he would cease his [illegible]onnections with worldliness and their moralities and [illegible]nmoralities. *The higher morals were held to be sure to follow the attainment of the higher ideal of religion.* It was from this standpoint that even the Bhakta prostitute of Brij was allowed to stand on an equal level with the Bhakta of purer morals. [illegible]rality, like other social conditions, was held to

grow upon man from his surroundings, and Bhakti was enough to clear off all its scums. To God Bhakti alone is dear, and Bhakti alone is the religion of this corrupt age of Kaliyuga. Men and women, people of all castes, people of all moralities are united to join in the chorus of Bhakti when God stands in flesh and blood to receive them in his presence and to emancipate them.

Where was this God in flesh and blood? The answer was: "You have to see Him with your mind's eye only—His image will float before you in the kindliest form you wished: He knows your wishes." The woman thus got her mother-goddess who, in Gujarat, is the kind-hearted mother whom mankind find in life, not the horrible Durgà who wants to devour animals, even human beings at sacrifices, such as is known and worshipped in other parts of India. Woman in Gujarat not only got her mother in this world but also got her lover Krishna. In the presence of either of them, as enshrined in her heart or in her idol's niche, she could stand and love as she would her mother or husband, and talk over the little scenes of her little life without reserve and with full faith that she was being listened to by one who took interest in her and had sympathy for her little ways of living. The Gujarati poets have sung of this Mata and Krishna, and, in those songs have sung out all such little ideas and ideals as have been endeared to them or cherished by them in their domestic life and yearnings. In Gujarat divinity hedges the hearth and not the king, and the poe

meets it guarding both home and hearth from the ravages of the sins of the age. To him Krishna's life does not and cannot poison the life of the Bhakta. Krishna has said: "He who will try to follow my life will go to hell; listen to my word and obey it if you want beatitude and if you love me. My life is a mystery that is full of lesson for the intellect that can unravel it, but the fool that will take it for a model will go to hell."

It is in this spirit that true Bhaktas sing and celebrate the life of Krishna, and what pious and virtuous women never dream of or talk of in actual life is sung with zest in the presence of parents and husbands when it forms an incident in the divine life of Krishna. This divine life is to these people a blessed dream wherein the mind can revel without bounds or limits, without committing a sin of soul or body, and it is a picturesque fairy land where the young and the old may read the novel of a life where social superstitions do not limit the vision of love. On the other hand the light-house of life is the direct word of the god Krishna, and that word breathes the highest morality for soul and body. If sceptics exist among Bhaktas and find an inconsistency between the life and word of God, they have only to be equal to the poetry and philosophy of Krishna, which, when understood, becomes transformed into a mystic and figurative expression of speech wherein the whole secret of Bhakti is symbolised! The problem of the origin of sin and evil never vexes these souls, for sin and evil are to

them only certain strata which grow upon human life by the operation of Kaliyuga, but will melt and evaporate like steam as the flame of Bhakti burns brighter and brighter. The two like water and fire, cannot live together. This is the faith and the hope of weak and erring humanity which is asked to grow strong by drinking the elixir of Bhakti all the waking and sleeping hours of life, and not to waste time in pondering over the vain and vexing riddles which have been puzzling the most learned ever since the creation of time. The Bhakta can spare time neither for the reasoning of philosophy nor for the repentance of Christianity in order to save himself from moral evils. His time and energy burn as but one flame of Bhakti. Religion is here made independent of ethical and social codes, which are left to live, if they can and as best they can, near the incense of Bhakti, which can only steam up perfume, and, between the perfume and the evil smell, it is only a question of power which one of the two would kill the other. This is not a unique way of looking at morality. The Sufi belief that he who is led by love is not subject to outward law, is a bolder and more unrelenting severance of religion from ethics than the Bhakti Márga ever thought of effecting. In Europe the Brothers of the Free Spirit maintained not less boldly that they could not be touched by any sin that they committed. The Bhakta's severance of religion from ethics had however the gentleness and the romantic spirit of the æsthetic Athenian who declined to believe that sin could presume to dwell with genuine Beauty.

Right or wrong, such was the religion which was overpowering the masses and driving away the last vestiges of Buddhism from the lower strata of society, after Saukar had dealt his fatal blows to the philosophy of Buddha. The propagators of this religion set fire to the whole fabric of Buddhism by applying their torches at the most inflammable points of the older fabric. Buddhism and Jainism which is a link between it and Brahmanism, had brought the Banyas to the front ranks in the political arena. The kings of Gujarat had Banyas for their ministers and the new religion of the Brahmans took them into its fold by consulting their tastes and tempers in settling its details. It went further and addressed itself to the instincts of womankind as the most powerful factor in stimulating society. It could also supply poets with beautiful tales and incidents which, when turned into song, should revolutionise the faith of the whole society. When the first great poets of Gujarat began to sing, such were the materials that had kindled their souls and made them unable to contain them within themselves. And accordingly we find them, all on a sudden and in the first half of the fifteenth century, bursting forth into poems whose melody of verse, sweetness of language, intensity of both pathos and sentiment, and fervour of religion, have never yet been surpassed in the language.

There were two great and two minor poets in Gujarat in the fifteenth century. Of the two latter one has translated the great Sanskrit romance of Kadambari, and the other has boiled down what he

calls the work of Bop-Dev, and by which he probably referred to the Bhagavat which later sectarians have fathered upon the author of the Mahabharat. A translation of the Kadambari is a novel feature in Gujarat, and later writers have never dreamt of trying their hand in that secular direction. But the translator Bhálan has written original poems also. As may be expected from what has been stated to be the history of the time, the subjects of the poems are different episodes in the lives of Rama, Krishna, and Siva. Though the heroes of these poems are different, there is but one God running through the veins of all of them, and the Bhakta of the one is the Bhakta of the other. The poet says that he who believes otherwise is a heretic. There are indications to show how and why Krishna came to be preferred to Siva. Siva was an ascetic deity and yet had a wife. The goddess brings back her husband from the forest after convincing him that it is better to live at home with one's own wife rather than be subject to temptations from other quarters in the forest. The episodes relating to Krishna and Rama have manifestly a greater charm than those of asceticism which seems to have grown insipid and unpalatable to the people of that age. In the words of Narasinh, who belongs to this age, and whom we shall shortly take up, the ascetic was told that his Rama was reserved for the last moments of death, and that Krishna was the more preferable of the two while life was enjoyable as life.

The works of these two minor poets are, however, obscure, evidently because they were eclipsed by

the two luminaries of Gujarati poetry who rose about the same time to sing infinitely better. The first of these was a lady of high social rank. She was the poetess Mirá, Queen to the illustrious King Kumbho, Rana of Mewar. Rana Kumbho was a descendant of the kings of Vallabhi, the ancient capital of Gujarat and a stronghold of Jains about the time it fell. One of his ancestors at Udepur, their capital in Mewar, had married a daughter of Noushirvan, an Emperor of Persia, and a granddaughter of Emperor Maurice of Constantinople. Kumbho's grandson was Rana Sanga who fought so valiantly with Emperor Baber. Kumbho himself had a great name. He inflicted a terrible defeat upon the allied Mahomedan Sovereigns of Gujarat and Malva, and took the latter prisoner and set him free, not only without ransom but with gifts. His other victories and services to his own people were great. He was a poet and had artistic tastes. And yet, as ironical fate sometimes has it, the Princess Mirá did not find his roof congenial to her tastes and pursuits. On the first day after her marriage she proudly told her mother-in-law that her head would not bow to the god of her husband's family—she had elected for her god and husband the god Krishna, who was of course not to be found on this earth. She retired to Gujarat and passed her life in Bhakti and in singing her Bhakti—in the company of Krishna who, though nobody saw him, was always present before her. When the king sends her a letter inviting her to Mewar to live with him, she sweetly asks him in reply to

abdicate the pageantry of the throne and to come and join her and her Sadhus in the sweet work they were doing. To use her own words, the world "tastes saltish" to Mirá, and she prefers "the ever-black blanket to the beautiful gown whose colours are treacherous and vanish." Her heart recoils from intrigues, and she asks her camel-driver to equip the animal well, for she has to travel away from her husband's roof through hundreds of miles as fast as she can. Mirá has to leave Mewar to her left and to travel to the west. She finds it sinful to take a drop of water in the territories of her Ranaji. Her heart is set upon Govinda and Ramji who dwell away from intrigue. She is entirely in the hands of Hari, and the love of Hari has taken possession of her heart. She passes her life in singing how her dear Hari lived and loved, how he captivated poor Gopis with the music of his flute, how he whistled from the depths of the forests on the banks of the Yamuna, and how the Gopis had to follow the direction of the music like spell-bound beings. The love that the Gopis yielded to the Krishna on earth, Mirá owes to the Krishna in the heavens and in her heart. No living man on earth could claim it. In one thousand sweet and homely songs has the broken heart of Mirá sung itself out, and the love, that the Rana had claimed in vain, was poured upon the divine and invisible ideal of her soul, and her little songs live to this day and have survived four hundred years. Pious women in Gujarat sing them in the presence of the same ideal and feel that they are nearer to heaven than to earth when Mirá's music is on their tongues. Young

women sing them at home and in public choruses, for Mirá's ideal is held to be an ideal for all women, and the heart of Mirá was as pure and innocent and sweet and God-loving as the heart of woman should be.

It seems the missionaries of the new religion of Bhakti were roaming about the whole of Gujarat at this time and charming the people with a religion which, while it allowed people like Mirá to pass an ascetic life, peopled their brains with the fairy-land visions of Krishna. Asceticism was thus rendered both sweet and virtuous, and the blanks of retirement were filled up with the cheerful dreams of a poetical religion. We find this amply illustrated in the life and poems of Mirá's great contemporary Narasinha Mehtá of Junagadh. Smarting under a bitter taunt from his brother's wife, he had retired to a forest whence he returned somehow introduced into the mysteries of the Rás Lilá and he thenceforth considered it the mission of his life to sing of Rás Lilá to the world. The old religion at his native place was that of Siva—a religion which, though it taught Bhakti, involved asceticism in mind and body. There were also the followers of Rama who observed a similar asceticism. The poet was persecuted for his heresy by his castemen, as well as by his king Rá Mandlik, as great scandal was caused by the poet's mode of life. He lived a beggarly life, collected a company of pious men and women about him and sang and danced with them in religious fervour. But the poet was indifferent to all scandals. He only cared to sing

of the Rás Lilá and to dance as in the Rás Lilá. His only relatives and friends, for whom alone he cared, were his little band of Bhaktas. It mattered not if the Bhaktas were the Mhars and Dheds, low-caste men, whose touch was an indelible pollution in the eyes of the world. The headman of the Dheds was a great Bhakta and invited the poet to go to his cottage and sing forth his songs. How could the Bhakta-poet make distinction between Bhakta and Bhakta? He and his band passed a whole night at the Dhed's cottage, singing and dancing to the name of Hari, and returned home in the morning openly continuing the song and dance in the street. His castemen, Nagars of high caste, surprised at the audacity, met him on the road, all asking, "What kind of man are you? What have you done?" The poet sang in reply: "I am that which you see! I am such as you call me! If you call me polluted by Bhakti, I shall continue it. Time was when I liked my house as you do now; now my mind moves singing of Hari from house to house. Call me bad if you choose. My love is deep. I do not like your ceremonies and religion. I love my Hari and his Bhaktas above all." The poet was excommunicated; but the Dheds rushed in a body when the Nagars were taking a caste-dinner, and the Nagars were compelled to take back the poet into the caste. As tradition puts it, Hari had turned himself into the Dheds.

The Rás Lilá, which had ravished the poet, is described by him with immense force and rapture, and, though he has not directly told us what

mystery underlay this idea, his philosophy indicates it well enough. "When I wake from this sleep of life," says the poet, "the world disappears, and these our puzzling enjoyments of life seem to be somnambulistic only. The heart is the soul, and all enjoyments and sports are its own outward forms. It is the Brahma that is flirting with the Brahma." "Hari! Thou art alone in the whole universe, infinite in thy numberless forms. Religion and ceremonies are a false gossip; worship, pilgrimage, the Vedas, and Shastras, all these are devices to eke out a livelihood—unless, oh man, thou knowest thyself, unless thou knowest the truth." The poet sees in the Brahma a double-sided unity. There are on the one side the visible forms—infinite and countless—dancing an eternal dance with the invisible One which representing the other side plays with them all and percolates and permeates into their hearts and becomes visible by the play. This One Being "plays through the vastness of the sky," and "for nges speaks one voice through it." This "Sachchidanand is playing the plays of joy," and, continues the poet in a language that unconsciously, rises to the sublimity of the Upanishads, "rocks himself in the golden cradle." He is a "lamp that lights itself without wick or oil." The saintly Bhaktas alone are able to "catch this all-pervading Eternal One in the net-work of ther love." This One is Krishna, and these Bhaktas—saints whether males or females to our human vision, are the frail loving forms—the Gopis—women who for love leave their worldly homes and belongings and madly run into the solitary forest in quest of this beloved One,

whose sweet Morli (flute) whistles through the whole universe which is the Vraj forest. "Sri Krishna is playing ever-renewing sports in the beautiful groves of this forest." This One Lord of such favoured mistresses "is far away from the reach of ascetic practices of tormenting the body and of ceremonies and rituals," and is approachable only by the strong love of Bhakti; but He will not allow himself to be aproached by any other means —be that means the killing of your body. When the saints eager for him do not find him, theirs becomes the condition which we call "the pangs of separation," for, "without getting the *One Substance*" itself, "appetite can never be quenched." He that cannot see "this Invisible One, cannot appreciate the beauty of the Visible." Such a one only "abuses the living Soul and bows to the Inanimate." This One has no form to be seen, and yet is "to be seen without any form of his and without your eye" and is "to be tasted without a tongue!" This beloved Lord "will give a spiritual fruition to those that love him," and thereupon the lady that so loves him will enjoy that union wherein the distinction between "I and thou ceases."

The dance of love between the Bhaktas and the one Lord is the basis of the allegorical Rás Lilá, and the allegory is worked up and extended intelligibly to a certain point. There is no distinction of caste or sex among the Bhaktas in the eyes of Hari; and the poetical faculty of man has not to overstrain itself in calling Hari the only man and in turning the Bhaktas of both sexes into so many

women of one fair sex—emblems of love, sweetness, and frailty.* The distinction of sex was in fact dropped as having no reference to the soul, and this poetical religion chose to start in its place a distinction, as the only one possible, between Hari and his Gopis—his favoured mistresses, ignorant little souls, whose only oblation was heartfelt love to Hari without any consciousness of his nature and greatness in other respects. Hari is invisibly present in the forest near the haunts of worldlings, and hidden within the foliage of some dark tree in that dark solitude. Hari whose body is dark in symphony with the things that keep him shrouded in a veil of mystery, sweetly whistles and by the magic of his notes draws these his favourite women from the distant village to give up the enthralling passions and cravings to which they are wedded as to husbands. These women steal away from the company of these husbands, and run in wild Bhakti to Hari. In the solitude of this forest and in the dead of night the one Hari turns himself into as many Haris as there are women. Hari is with every heart, and the sweet and all-absorbing dance of Love and Bhakti proceeds, and all become one with Hari. This is the Rás of the Human Heart with Hari, and the poet is ravished with the Rás Lila, and is born to describe it to the world. How did he get at it? Why, the poet, like all men, is a

* These and the other allegories here referred to are used and not explained by the poet. The heads of the Vallabhacharya sect which was founded after his death, embodied one of them in the form of a vow which their devotees are called upon to take, viz., that they are Gopis of Brij.

woman to whom, in the hour of night, Hari came slowly and gently, bound her by some mysterious spell, stole away her heart, and she was awakened to find herself in his sweet presence. She got thereby all that could be desired in this world, and she gave up her domestic avocations. In fact the poet seems to exclaim as a Christian poet did :—

"Oh the pleasures I partake—
God the partner of my night!"

Nay, the tables are turned, and God and his Bhakta become on an occasion woman and man instead of man and woman ; and the man-poet is then equally captivated with the vision of the fascinating fair one, and does, as the Christian poet did,—

"Muse all night
On the first Eternal Fair."

The poet was not content with composing poems to describe this Rás; he collected men and women to enact it as on a stage, and they sang and danced the Rás in honour of Hari. If wicked people came like wise-acres to dissuade the servants of Hari from serving him, the poet could not listen to them. What mattered it, if pious women joined him in the song and dance of Hari? If they were women, he was woman too. The only man was Hari, and, by the Rás dance of hearts, he absorbed his women into himself. What the poet seems to have so conceived, he has reduced into songs which survive to this day like Mira's songs and supply pious Bhaktas with communion and fruition of Hari. We see in his raptures and songs the great secret of the new religion that had by this

time largely developed the ravishing ideas and images without whose help a religion so firmly rooted as Buddhism was, would never have given way. The poems do reach a point where the allegory is not traceable and merges into love-stories and hero-worship and the like. But even then the dying notes of the allegory will here and there not fail to ring in the ear once rendered sensitive to the main-spring of the poet's heart.

The poems of Narasinha Mehta and Mira may be said to be the nucleus of all subsequent literature on the subject. As the lives of the leading Plantagenets and Tudors are known to many English people as Shakespeare has drawn them, Gujarat derives its associations of Krishna from the lively imagery in the poems of Mirá and Mehta Narasinha and of others who have followed in their wake. Does a mother want to see her own love to her child visibly painted before her? Mother Jasoda and all the villagers of Gokul had poured their love upon the sweet little baby Kanaiyá; and the poet and poetess have sweetly sung of it. Woman in Gujarat marries before she loves, and the family customs allow no scope to her indulging in even a bit of such open partialities and vanities as her heart may be longing for even in respect of her husband. But when she sings of Kanaiya and the Gopis, both husband and wife enjoy the open expression of something which they have been used to feel in their own hearts. The Bhakta, on the other hand, finds in the exploits of the ten Avatárs a living power extending its ægis of protection to save the

Bhaktas from the furious and eternal storm of the internecine and mortal war that is always being waged in this world between the Good and the Bad. The masses find that God, as shown by the poet, may be reached by the highway of Bhakti which is accessible to all, and that the hopeless and uphill roads of philosophy, austerities, &c., are by no means indispensable. And, finally, to their question as to what kind of being is God, the answer given is not a conundrum of unverifiable and intangible definitions of the Deity, but the answer readily and intelligibly points at the worship of heroes whose names, antiquity has gilt with golden associations, whose traditions find an agreeable response in the life of the nation, whose realization before the mind's eye requires the dullest brain to do no more than simply to see that he may love his God as he or she would love his or her child, or wife or husband, or father or mother, or friend or protector, and the story of whose lives turns out to be but an expression of philosophical formulas and truths open to discovery when the illiterate man, who commenced with faith, arrives at a point when he would know before believing. The successful development of such a system of religion, among the mercantile classes who were thereby weaned from the bosom of rival faiths, among the Brahmans who were persuaded to give up all but the name of the old Vedic religion in favour of this Bhakti: this and much more was the combined work of religious missionaries and of poets. And the influence of Narasinha and Mirá has been no small factor in working in this way not only upon the

masses, but upon other poets as well for more than four centuries.

Gujarat had only three poets and those of obscure fame in the sixteenth century—and yet this century is not without its significance. These three poets—Vasto, Vachharáj, and Tulsi—have left poems in which we can clearly feel the quickening of the genius of the next century which was to burst upon the country with a regular shower of great poets and with a variegated luxuriance of beautiful and powerful poetry. This next, that is, the seventeenth, century, is the most important period in the history of Gujarati poetry.

Northern Gujarat was in the possession of the Ahmedabad Sultans in the fifteenth century, and the date of the final conquest of Junagadh in remoter West by Sultan Mahomed Begada in 1472 is also the period about which Narasinha Mehta's career closes. Subsequently to this the Sultan was pushing his conquest in eastern Gujarat and was engaged in conquering Chámpáner, the great capital of Gujarat proper, which is now in ruins; and when his power was exhausted, there was more than a century's reign of anarchy in Gujarat, and poetry does not grow during such periods. It was in 1573 that Ahmedabad was conquered by the great Emperor Akbar. Peace however does not seem to have been established among the people until the close of the century; and as soon as there was peace and quiet in the country, poets appeared on the horizon. The great and long blank in poetry till then is thus explained by the disturbed state of the country,

and yet may it not be that Champaner, which is not without its poetic associations, had a poetry which is lost to us with the t own ?

The three great poets who dawn upon our horizon with peace and quiet in the seventeenth century, are Premánand, Sámal and Akho. Each worked on his own original plan, each supplemented the work of the other, and each excelled in his own great work. We are agreeably surprised to find that in this new epoch religion and Bhakti no longer appropriate the whole field of poetry. But poetry now for the first time in the province grows up upon its own independent foundations, and, itself emancipated and free, begins its own work towards the emancipation, enlargement and ennoblement of the minds and aspirations of men. This is said, not with a view to cast any aspersion against religion, but to dispel the local superstition which has for centuries made poetry the handmaid of religion as if it were not entitled to be its own mistress. It is as gaining us no small point in this direction that the works of these admittedly great and popular poets require to be properly explained to the people.

We shall begin with Akho, for his work as a poet was more destructive than constructive. The poetry which had first inspired and enlivened Mirá and Narasinha, had passed into the hands of the priests and heads of the Vallabháchárya sect by this time. Krishna, or, as he is fondly called, Kanaiyá, the ideal imagery of whose early career had thrown a golden

cloud of associations over the beautiful groves of Brij, was also idolised and enshrined in temples; and with this transmigration of the Deity from poetry to idol-worship, the God in this new incarnation was made to travel into the heart of Mewar and Gujarat. The Mewar temple had not only its idol, but the idol had for its head-worshippers the ancestors of those whom we now call the Vaishnav Maharajas. The relations between this Mewar idol and the Maharajas may, for the sake of brevity, be best expressed as having been similar in kind to those of the descendants of Sivaji and their ministers the Peishwas. The Gujarat headquarters of the idol were fixed at Dakor, and the Dakor temple has been fortunate in not having had its Peishwa. The Mewar temple seems to have risen into importance before the Dakor temple, and the poet Akho was, by birth and breeding, a pious devotee of the Mewar temple. But fiery minds can seldom resist the temptation of breaking through the prison-walls of birth and breeding, and they generally feel it their mission to break through the walls. The new field into which their minds issue, tries and taxes their originality and their power. Akho was neither a Brahman nor a Banya. He was a goldsmith by caste, and his mind was unfettered by any hereditary predilections for the traditions of the Brahmans or the moral imbecilities of mercantile calculators. He wanted to think for practical purposes. When he had ideas, he managed to see that he had also words for his ideas, and his words are neither more nor less than his ideas. A practical philosophy is his method; and to find out

the purest gold for the human soul is the all-absorbing aspiration of this goldsmith. He takes in hand thing after thing from what he finds among his surroundings, and rejects and destroys it as worthless alloy. He succeeds at last in finding his gold in the philosophy of Sankar, and this he turns into fancy ornaments with exultations and constructs his own system out of it. Whether he destroys or constructs, he has a singular power of getting rid of the most inveterate superstitions of the land. The Vedantic fabric which he *constructs*, was fitted for the audience that he drew about him. But this fabric is after all derivative. His great originality lies in his destructive system. He has a powerful wit for pithy and epigrammatic satire. His onslaughts are dreadful and never fail to hit the right nail on the head. For this purpose he coins new sayings and adages which, while they are entirely original, wonderfully appeal to latent but powerful sentiments of native life and, like several of Shakespeare's expressions, have acquired a popular currency in the vernacular.

His first Guru, or religious preceptor, was the then head of the Vallabhacharya sect. Akho finds, to use his own words, that, in having accepted him for his Guru, he has yoked an old bullock to his cart—a bullock that is a charge on his purse but cannot carry the cart on the way to salvation. He is to Akho a wrong Guru who is fixed to a stone and wants to swim. Such a Guru is like the child-wife who becomes a mother at a very tender age and the development of whose body is pre-

maturely checked by her early child-bed—a simile which may possess historical interest for our modern social reformers. Akho has a word to say against the general idea of his people that the touch of a low-caste man carries pollution with it. Pollution, he says, is daughter to the low-caste man and is wedded to the foolish husbands, the Brahmans and the Vaishnavs—fools who, when they fancy they are polluted, bathe their external skins and can neither see nor cleanse their internal selves. They have a high idea of themselves and take sweet Mowra flowers for real grape. They are like the blind woman who tries and tries, and tries to spread her bedding until she finds that the night is over. Akho thinks that pilgrimages are worse than useless. Hari is to be got at home and not by wasting time in wandering abroad. The fools don't see that silk does not become hair by washing. Akho laughs to find these fools worshipping stones and brass of their own make, and searching for God outside themselves when he is in reality within them. How can devotion and prayer and Bhakti be a means to your knowing Brahma? Man's soul swims like fishes and flies like birds with her own wings of reasoning and does not want other means to know her Highest Self. The song of prayer without knowledge is like the barking of a dog that prompts and sets all its fellow dogs of the street to set up a joint howl of barking. How do blind people stick to caste and the like? That is like embracing the wave in order that you may swim. Brahma is the ocean that fills the universe and people have to swim with their own art and

strength on its bosom. Akho once saw a fool worshipping all the stones he could lay hold of! This was preposterous! Where did the dunce find more than one God? In the midst of such fools who only wander near their destruction when the whole town is on fire, Akho is like the bird that flies up to the wide wide heavens and defies the flames.

Where is Brahma,—God—to be found? The six schools of philosophy destroy one another, like the blind well wherein none was able to live—to restore things to harmony. Akho warns himself against raving like the poets who take the world as true, who thunder, like clouds, not in order to rain, but to show the possibility of a down-pour. It rains only when it is time for it. Then there are those people who think Sanskrit is all in all! There is no divine charm in any particular language. He who comes out triumphant, is the hero. You can't lose by speaking your vernacular, nor gain by speaking Sanskrit. On the other hand it is the vernacular that is the wooden bow that propels the arrow of Sanskrit; it is the principal sum on which Sanskrit accrues as interest. Language is simply a network of the 52 letters of the alphabet, and the real substance lies in the 53rd *thing*: where language ends, substance begins. To what extent the pithy and powerful writings from which the above few samples are drawn, made themselves felt when they were written and read under the poet's own eyes, it is difficult to say after this long lapse and barrier of time. If the poets that lived in his time

are an index of their age, it is clear that the seventeenth century was the age in which pure poetry and philosophy preponderated over the artificial religions which had grown up during the previous centuries. For reasons which will have to be mentioned further on, the succeeding age was one of retrogression wherein the good and new influence of this century seems apparently to have been obliterated. But even now Akho, though not widely read, is held in high esteem, and it is even now felt, as I heard a Sástri once exclaim of him, "The man is dreadful—this Akho spares no one and looks invincible!"

The constructive part of Akho is drawn from the Vedanta philosophy, and he himself says his philosophy should not be taken for poetry. Akho wants to rise and raise to The Highest Self, and the brilliant rays of this Highest Self—like the rays of the sun—are not a matter for description. They defy description; they are like the sky that cannot be weighed in any scales. They exceed the limits of the mind; and as for poor poets, theirs are simply the powers and arts of the mind, and these powers and arts must, of necessity, be confined within the limits of the mind. The Brahma extends beyond the mind and is beyond poetry.

Thus did this goldsmith Poet who is said to have been in charge of the Imperial Mint at Ahmedabad, leave to Gujarat a voice, which his poems, like the American invention which preserves and reprodnces dead voices, have preserved for us in its life-like state, to be heard and felt

with its original power by him who has a mind to do so.

The other poets of the century are divided into two rival schools. One of them is headed by Premánand. Sámal belongs to the other, but he is the only member of his school without a single follower, though not without a competitor in the opposite school who tried in vain to rival him. Like the great satirist Akho, Samal was alone and single-handed in the field. But both Samal and Premánand differed from Akho in this that they were not philosophers but pure poets, and as poets they have a higher and wider fame and influence among the masses.

Premánand is, by the latest concensus of local critics, the greatest poet of Gujarat. He flourished at Baroda, but also passed parts of his life at Surat, as also at Nandurbar in Khandesh. Khandesh and Gujarat both seem to have enjoyed peaceful days under the Great Moghuls Jehangir and Shah Jehan, and Premánand was not only a well-read man but a well-travelled man, who was not quite out of touch with the splendour of the times. Like Akho he knew Sanskrit well, but, unlike him, he had also studied the Great Puráns and poems of that ancient language. He was not only a poet himself but was also the originator of a school of poets who lived under his guidance much like that cluster of glorious writers who gathered together round the person of Dr. Johnson. He brought up about thirty-seven people as his pupils and followers in poetry and made them compose poems according

to their individual tastes and powers. These thirty-seven people included even twelve ladies and a few Banyas. His great aspiration was to raise up a Gujarati literature of a high and liberal character, and his idea will best be understood by the works of his leading followers. For instance, he entrusted his son Vallabh with the work of writing original poems in Gujarati on the models of the great poems in the Hindi language, and of the bardic poems written for the Rajput princes of old in their peculiar dialect. To Ratneshvar he allotted philosophical poems. It is said that Ratneshvar was asked to copy Marathi poets, but neither the power nor the poetry of that race had begun its life about this time. In fact Ratneshvar began with Sanskrit models. Premánand himself tried his hand on drama and poetry, and his plays have an originality about them making naive departures from the grooves of Sanskrit dramatic science in favour of his own vernacular sentiments, and yet showing no illiberal spirit against Sanskrit charms. He had laid out a varied and liberal programme of poetical works to be executed by various hands. The programme was carried out by many able and enthusiastic men, and for the great discoveries of their works the public is immensely indebted to the enlightened administration of His Highness the Gaekwar and his present Divan. Rich mines have been opened to us by their efforts, and the works of Premánand's pupils show very great industry and ability. If they were not well known till now, it was because they were totally eclipsed by the dazzling masterpieces of their

master Premánand himself. The works of these poetasters throw a good deal of light over the conditions and tastes of the society in which they lived. They were not born poets, but except in a few cases there is an amount of artlessness about their poems, which is sure to invest them with interest for the historian of society and manners.

But the poet Premánand himself is a man of different stuff. He was, like the satirist Akho, very angry with the vain pride and haughtiness of the Sanskritists of his time, and one object of his above programme was to wage a long and successful war with the Sanskrit Puranis and others by producing great works in Gujarati without stooping to the narrow-minded and uneducated prejudice, which is only recently dying out, against enriching a language of domestic ideas and words by drawing largely upon the only language which is near at hand and which is one of the richest languages the world has produced. He was amply rewarded by the achievements of his pen. He, in fact, wanted to banish the vain-glorious Sanskritist, and not the rich jewels of the refined Sanskrit, from the masses, and eventually his great and true boast was that he had succeeded in placing his name and compositions on every singing tongue in his part of Gujarat. Time has wafted his poems over the whole of Gujarat, and while illiterate Brahman women can recite from memory the whole of many a poem of Premánand, while the best of his poems are read by the fireside and in family circles on summer nights, those who can enjoy Shakespeare and

Kalidas, do not grudge to admit the refined and native charms in the great poems of this man. There is that in his works which gratifies all, and therefore must make him immortal where he can be understood.

He has drawn upon numerous episodes from Sanskrit literature and other sources, and chosen for his subjects names and tales whose very mention was enough to attract people to take up his works for reading. An apt illustration of this may be found in the fact that the subjects of some of his best poems are episodes from the life of the popular poet Narasinha Mehta. He scrupulously avoids doing violence to the popular faith and beliefs, and at the same time is always loth to degrade himself by pandering to the vulgarities of the masses or stooping to the sensualism of the Vaishnav poetry. Upon such foundations he raises solid and tasteful superstructures by supplying the people with adaptations of their time-honoured and revered tales and fictions into the language and life of Gujarat. From this language and life he makes clever selections of what is beautiful or sublime. His great province is the beautiful and the sublime in the hearts of the men and women of his country. As regards the actual manners of society, he paints them in glowing colours where he likes and loves them. However, he does not much indulge in paintings of this kind, but generally rises above the manners and social institutions of his times and translates the people into higher forms of society and sentiments, where it is not children that are married by custom but

men and women who are drawn into sacred wedlock by spontaneous unions of heart. Religion he loves, and he is fond of bringing out the poetry of the religious of his country-men so far as it is a poetry of the heart. These are some of the leading features of his *modus operandi*, and the result is a number of beautiful poems which supply Gujarat with purer and higher ideals of social life and place before the people touching or thrilling pictures of what is beautiful and ennobling in the dearest of their sentiments and associations. That a poet who has successfully worked upon these lines, should be immortal in his land, that his works should be read and enjoyed by those who can read, and that those who are illiterate should have them recited before them: all this is very intelligible even in a country which got its printing press only after a century and a half had rolled on after the poet had ceased to sing. Manuscript copies of the poet's works are even at this day preserved and copied and circulated and greedily read, and women who cannot read commit whole poems of his by heart and communicate their dear treasures to their sisters and friends and daughters.

Much has been done of late, especially by the administration of His Highness the Gackwar and by the Editor of the *Gujarati*, to unfathom from oblivion the writings of this as of other poets. But it seems the law of the survival of the fittest has worked in Gujarati poetry, for it may be at once asserted that those works of the poet which were known and preserved by the people of Gujarat

prior to these discoveries are the best as well as the maturest of Premanand's productions. No doubt much yet remains unexplored, and it may be premature to form any opinion so soon; still past experience shows that the new discoveries are not likely to be of further interest than so far as they may allow us a peep into the poet's individuality and history. Of course a gain even of this kind is not to be ignored, but it can have only an historical and scholarly rather than poetical interest.

The poets of this age are in one sense above the society in which they lived. This society does not seem to have much differed from the one which is vanishing during this our own generation under the influence of Western ideas. The poems of Akho, Premanand, and Samal, all foreshadowed a society higher than this; and probably their ideal would have been reached, had not political vicissitudes blasted the new life that was beginning to dawn on the country. Thus the most popular of Premanand's poems draws a social picture which even in these days is only a dream at the best, and to draw a picture like it would draw down the rage of society on its audacious artist. This poem is the Okhá-Haran. Okhá is confined within a black-hole by her father from interested motives; and her friend Destiny has wings and puts herself on her wings to secure Okhá her sweetheart by theft from his royal grandfather's palace. The religion of the land wants that the father should perform her daughter's marriage. But the poet can teach his heroine to resort to the Gandharva marriage. The loves of Okhá and her

over, the anger of her father, the consequent battles between the father of Okhá on the one hand and the young hero and his father and grandfather on the other, and the ultimate reconciliation of all parties ending in the bride being given to her lover by her father: these and a number of minor scenes have been turned by the poet into so many occasions to raise before his audience the picture of men and women who feel like the people of Gujarat and yet live under conditions which violate the existing manners and institutions of child-marriages and paternal despotism. The power of the poet and the sacred source of the plot not only make the people tolerate his audacity, but compel them to sanction it as sacred and lovely, and make them shed tears for the sufferings of the rebellious daughter—a daughter who would be stoned to death if she could turn up in their midst even in these days.

Of a higher kind are the poems on Nala and Sudámá. The original from which the episodes of the poems are drawn are well-known in Sanskrit literature, and one of them has been narrated by the marvellous pen of Vyás, the author of the Mahá Bhárat. The merits of the poem of Vyás are great, and Premanand never meant to presume to rival Vyás. He has only placed before his people a Nala and a Damayanti who have loved and suffered, not in the ways of the old days of Vyás, but in the way in which his own Gujarat would expect and understand. Various incidents enable the poet in this and other poems to bring out the tenderest pains and sentiments of the mother, the daughter, the father, the

orphan, the husband and the wife. The mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law and the caste-people are not omitted from the variegated poetic canvas. The poet has also a deep insight into the heart of the Bhakta and even of the philosopher who disdains to sweat for bread. His beggar-philosopher has a wife who loves her lord and children but is unable to understand the philosophy that makes voluntary penury a necessity. The philosopher is a friend to the royal Krishna, and why should not the philosopher go to the friend? "Oh, my dear," says the philosopher, "how can I humiliate myself before a friend and beg for the sake of belly? Death is better than begging. Have contentment, my dear, God has his eyes over us." "Oh, my lord," says the starved wife, "you have turned yourself into a Pundit, a philosopher, and an ascetic! You won't go to beg of your friend, and I a woman cannot go to him — I am a woman,—woe to a woman's sex—it makes her so helpless." She weeps because she is born a woman and not a man. Her ultimate answer to her lord's varied philosophy—and it is the answer that along with her tears succeeds—is simply this: "My lord, I do not like your philosophy at all! My mind has become dull! Go, my lord, and bring some food, for the children weep and cry for want of it. I beg a hundred times—Go. You cannot philosophize or pray unless you have had food in the first instance." The poet has evidently a higher sympathy for the wife than her husband had. He internally feels that the poetry of the heart and human affections have a mysterious control over philosophical theories and religious visions.

This may be further illustrated from another poem. The life of Krishna is divided into two periods, the first of which is spent among the cowherds and girls of Gokul, and the second in the arena of political and warlike life. When the time comes for his giving up the humble society at Gokul and he feels called upon to attend to the duties of the other life, he has to desert Gokul for good and to part with his foster-mother Jasoda and his loving Gopis for ever. He, however, sends his friends Akrur and Uddhav to sermonize both Jasoda and the Gopis, and to teach them to put themselves into religious communion with God and to find their beloved and absent Krishna in the ever-present God-head that pervades the universe. "Communion!" cry the enraged and exasperated Gopis, "We have no room for it in our frames. There is not an inch of our bodies and minds where Krishna himself is not. Our frames and our visions in and out are full of Krishna to the brim. There is no room left for communion when we feel one with him already even in this separation." The foster-mother Jasoda speaks more plainly and bluntly: "I do not know that my child Krishna is God—I do not believe it. How can the lord of the universe tend my cows? Uddhav, I must tell you, we shepherds are not philosophers, and will have none of your philosophy. I am the mother of my child Krishna, and shall weep, and weep, and weep for him, and shall never accept your word to believe that my child is God and is present in invisible form, though he is bodily present elsewhere." Uddhav is wonder-struck with what he sees and

hears at Gokul. Krishna, he finds, has a wonderful fascination over the hearts of all people in this little village. Man and woman, child and adult, at work or at leisure, has the name of Krishna on the tip of his or her tongue, and thinks of Krishna, and the invisible Krishna reigns in all hearts. He returns to Krishna, and tells him that the world at Gokul is full of him. It is in such pictures that we see how this magician poet has probed the hearts of his countrymen and wrung out of their recesses a poetry which, while it is sweet and human and pure, tries to disentangle itself from misleading philosophy without at the same time assailing the religious susceptibilities of his readers. The love of Bhakti has a high place in his poetry of affections; but with theories he has nothing to do, or at least poetry is higher than these theories.

The poet's works are full of episodes in which the gentler sex exerts her benign and softening and even pious influence over the heart of man, and he hedges her with a halo of divinity which makes rough man not only love, but respect, her. One of his poems is entitled the Battle-Sacrifice, and its subject is the war against Ravan, the Paris of the Indian Illiad. This Paris has kept his Helen, Sita, in a solitary garden for years, and he daily visits her on the mission of love, but always returns baffled by his own heart. And why? He is a ferocious monarch and a voluptuous lover. He might court Sitá or lay violent hands upon her honour. What makes him desist? The husband of Sitá is at the gates of his capital with a powerful army. Ravan ought

either to restore Sitá to him or to force his Helen to yield to his wishes. He can do neither, and is in a fix. His haughty spirit disdains to yield in humiliation to an enemy. On the other hand he can do nothing with Sitá. Always calling on Sitá with what the great English poet would call "Tarquin's ravishing strides," he is baffled in her presence by his own feeling that she resembles his mother, and he always returns to his post as did Lady Macbeth saying of King Duncan: "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it." Some orientalists have sat in criticism upon Valmiki and found fault with the high improbability of this part of human nature in Ravan. The Gujarati poet supplies as above no weak reply to the critics. Ravan moreover has his own wife whom he loves and respects, and, though he has kicked and driven away his brother for telling him that he has wronged Ráma and must beg his pardon and restore Sitá, Ravan cannot treat his wife in the same way, when it is she who advises him to the same effect and accompanies her advice with a virtuous sermon. "Mad woman," replies the Lord of Lanká to her, "Dost thou think I am mad? I was the first to philosophize on this matter. See why I have done this. I have tasted the highest sweets of worldly blessings, triumphs in wars, and all that royalty and triumphs can shower on a king. Now I am tired of them, and my aspirations turn another way. I no longer like this pomp and glory. My heart is set upon a glorious end of my career—Glorious death in the battle-field at the hands of the divine Ráma!" He longs, in fact, for a glorious death to

crown a glorious life. The wife feels proud of a husband who pleads so well in excuse of a fatal policy, and sends him to war with her sweet blessings. So felt King Henry IV. in the hands of the great Shakespeare, when his wild heir-apparent pleaded to him his clever excuse for putting on his crown even while his royal father was alive on his death-bed.

Samal, the contemporary and rival of the great Premanand, was a poet of human nature, but he approached his subject from a different stand-point. Both of them were engaged in employing what has been called the poet's process of widening nature, and they were both widening the nature of man —giving it a further development. But the fields in which they employed this process were not the same. While Premanand studied and pictured out the beautiful and the sublime in human hearts, Samal sang of their greatness as manifested in the powers and potentialities of will and intelligence when allowed to be freed from the artificial shackles of local prejudices, and his mission was to raise the eyes of his audience to that point. It was not, however, the philosophical or the religious powers of the soul to which he referred. It was the mundane greatness of the soul that he sang, and his circumstances both led and confined him to this. He was a Brahman by caste, but his patron was Rakhiyal, a great landholder of the Kunbi caste, who lived in a village in what is now the district of Kaira. The religion and philosophy of the sacerdotal caste would have been quite out of

place in Rakhiyal's house, and the poet of the Kunbi is the only poet in Gujarat who could shake off in its entirety from his poetry the hybrid incubus of religion, philosophy and mythology which weighs more or less upon the breast of every other poet of Gujarat. Even Premanand had a Brahmanised audience, and his poems, though relieved of religion in its strict sense, could not quite divorce themselves from the susceptibilities of his audience, who would not allow anybody to waste their time with what had not the air of religion. Premanand, either from his own tastes or through shrewdness, tried to win his people to hear him by making them fancy that they were listening to religious song, while in reality he was singing pure poetry which was connected with religion and philosophy by a fiction only in that he did no more than merely draw the materials of his fictions from books which were written in Sanskrit, or, at the most, in this that he indented upon mythology for some of his tales. He in fact created a delusion in the minds of people that he was singing of religious things, and, through that happy delusion, made them read and appreciate genuine poetry with a zest which religion could never have created so widely or sustained so long.

Samal, on the other hand, had the good luck to be under no such necessity of passing off poetry for religion, and he turned his freedom to good account. He wrote a large number of poems, all fictions, in which he constructed for his audience a new world of men and women who soared above the narrow-minded and blasting social institutions of his

countrymen, and he revelled in pointing out and picturing to them modes of living which made his characters, parent and child, man and woman, meet each other upon terms of independence and toleration which could have had no place under the social prejudices and practices of his countrymen. We, Hindus of this generation, may well speak of free and advanced societies and of social reform by looking at our rulers, but the idea of a world of people living in that way could only have been conceived and bodied forth with such realistic vividness by nothing short of the powerful imagination of an original and poetic genius, when we remember that it was worked out in that manner by a Brahman of Gujarat in the seventeenth century when neither the rulers nor the ruled could exhibit more than a picture of gloomy social restrictions. We are not able at this day to say whether society in Gujarat was more free in the days of Samal than it is now or was before the beginning of this generation. There is, no doubt, the fact of the poet Premanand having had a number of ladies as a part of his school of poets. But the direction in which Akho exhausted his quivers shows that the society so attacked was not much different from the society which existed before the beginning of this generation. Whatever that might have been, it is certain that the social features of Samal's fictions are wonderfully in advance of his times, and the genius that conceived and constructed them is the genius of a great and free poet. It is this social heterodoxy and advance of Samal's mind that also explains why he was single in his

field and why he has not had any followers as Premanand had. But the works of Samal are still preserved and read in manuscript and in lithograph; and though his appreciation is naturally not so great as that of Premanand's works, a wide interest in his work exists none-the-less among the communities he had addressed, and, in the interests of social reform, requires to be made more intelligent and universal. No Gujarati poet is more fitted to educate the masses socially so well as Samal is. He has been single and unassisted till now, but his cause and mission is worthy of a following in these days, if the masses are to be educated.

The hero of several of Samal's poems is King Vikram, the founder of the Samvat Era. King Vikram is a philanthropist of cosmopolitan sympathies in Samal's works, and he is born to relieve humanity from misery. He lives and moves like the knights of western romances, and, like Aladin can force a genie to assist him on occasions. Excepting this, Samal's world is not presided over by any mythological beings interesting themselves in the affairs of a human world like the Greek gods that take part in the war of Troy. Instead of god or gods, Samal has recourse to this historical and ideal redeemer of his country, who is a man with a romantic philanthrophy of soul, and moves among his fellow-creatures and exposes himself to suffering and hardship in order to relieve them from sufferings, because he is driven to this career by the wild hurricane of his own noble spirit. He is in this way the hero-general of many a poem which has

always its sub-hero. There are also several poems of the poet in which he manages without any Vikram.

Advancing a stage further within the networks of this poet, we find him employed in constructing fresh societies for his audience. Though he draws his plots from old Sanskrit works of fiction and from current legendary lore, he creates an altogether new world out of his scanty materials. The men and women whom he creates, marry without any distinction of caste. Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Banyas intermarry in this world of the poet. And they marry by fancy or charm or true love, and often in defiance of parental wishes. Parents become angry with children who marry in this rebellious way and wish to destroy those who have introduced such rank mutiny in the family, but have ultimately to reconcile themselves to the inevitable results of their children's inclinations. Thus one of his kings is angry with his daughter for having become wife to a husband without marriage and in defiance of the Shastras. But the priest who had secretly helped the young couple comes to bear witness to the fact that they were married *summarily* and that the father may have his ceremonies and rites at pleasure. What the lawyers call the doctrine of *fatum valet* is in fact coolly applied to the case.

One universal Hindu idea from the oldest times has been that a woman is bound to marry, and a lifelong Hindu spinster is a creature of Utopia. The very idea of an adult spinster is foreign to the

Hindu mind. But to Samal it is a natural idea. A young lady in one of his poems is secretly engaged to somebody, and her father wants to give her a husband of his own selection. The family is of the Banya caste, and the lady angrily tells her father: "I don't want a husband. I have undertaken a vow of celibacy, and you should not speak a word that will derogate from the merits of the vow. I do not aspire to marry." The whole idea is original, and the appalling vow of celibacy is a comic reflection against the practice of vows as well as against the national institution of allowing no woman to grow up unmarried.

The love depicted in Samal's poems is either the result of first-sight impressions or of the woman's ravishment of soul with some intellectual or sentimental trait of her lover. The advances are made and courtship is begun by the ladies in the first instance, an idea which has also been suggested in a different way by Lord Lytton in his "Coming Race." When once the woman makes up her mind, the force of her will carries everything before it, and she is always bound to succeed. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule. One of his heroines, trying to marry an unwilling man, is cheated, and by mistake elopes with and marries a reputed fool. But marriage cannot make her love the man, and it is not until she is made to know that the fool has that merit in him which she loves, that she is forced by her nature to love him. Does Samal know what it is in man that a woman loves? Yes, she loves one who excels in some quality of body or soul, some-

thing æsthetical or intellectual, on which she has set her heart and for which alone she barters away and gives up her otherwise uncontrollable independence and turbulence of will. She wants her own superior, her master, in that quality. She loves and enjoys that piece of superiority in this man and is not content until she finds the man that can compel her to love and enjoy like that. Make her but love, and she has a powerful will to secure the object of her love. She is no wanton as society believes. If in the existing society she is not content, it is because she has not what she wants. Give her the one man that she wants, and she wants none else. This is the burden and keystone of many a poem of Samal's.

The poet has an infinite number of other things to say to his countrymen. Woman may not only be a spinster, but she may be neither a married woman nor a spinster, that is, a concubine. Concubines figure in his poems, but not in their degraded way. He can conceive a better form of life for them, and in that form they are much similar to the learned and accomplished concubines of Athens, with whom men like Pericles and even philosophers associated. His concubine is not quite excluded from the threshold of the family matron. Her valuable assistance, her knowledge of human nature, her skill and cunning, her arts and devices, her invention and judgment,—these are utilized by kings and subjects, by men and women, for saving the innocent victims of rogues and swindlers. She—the concubine—assists young ladies in saving their chosen lords

from the vengeance of their fathers. She educates young men in the refined arts of life. She can solve many a riddle of life. And she is no mean creature. She has drawn her wisdom and arts from her most varied experience. And though she does not marry according to our artificial ways, she selects and loves her ideal man as any other woman does, and she sticks to him for his virtues.

And what do Samal's women see and learn? They are not illiterate and secluded fools. That they walk alone and travel riding on horseback is the smallest thing they do. They study the national love and literature as a matter of course, and they study under male teachers too. They advance to refined arts, draw pictures, paint, sing; and even dance. The heroine who, as above mentioned, has married a seeming fool, would not look at the man until convinced of his possessing the very attainments she prized. The lady dances a most difficult dance—a dance which reminds one of the complicate and expressive dances of the Athenian drama, and the seeming fool has to play on the Veena as an accompaniment to this dance; and it is only when he has played most beautifully on the Veena and played to all the subtleties of the whole dance, that the woman loves the man and repents having not loved such a man. The heart of a woman will never be enslaved until love captivates it. A dance like this is the very verge of social heresy on the part of Samal, and the poet adds a grim heterodoxy to his heresy when he makes the father of the lady overflow with open joy and

secret happiness to see his daughter and son-in-law excel so well in such an attainment.

Samal not only constructs in this way what must look like a society of fairy-land to his countrymen, but he also tries to directly dissipate the social superstitions of the country and to preach positive and practical lessons of life. The real hero of Nanda Batrishi, for instance, is a man who represents a typical character, a jealous husband, who cannot believe that his wife could have had the power to resist the temptation to yield to a royal visitor. The man scoffs at all those who try to make him believe otherwise, and is obstinate in his views. The whole poem strives with equal and successful persistence to remove the cloud from the man's mind. Another poem preaches optimism and asks man to have courage in the midst of the most hopeless adversity, and to see that, if he lives, he may survive to see better days. Then he has a poem on Fatalism, which is another item of national belief in his country. The poet comes to the conclusion that, as between Fate or Destiny on one hand and Human Effort on the other, Destiny is only another name for Human Effort and Human Effort is the pivot upon which Fate or Destiny turns. They are not two different things.

The poet always and in all his varied works meant to preach against some such "idol of the tribe or locality," or to illustrate some new point or principle of human nature as a latent force which it was not safe or natural to ignore. He focussed his whole spirit in this way and treated

all other matters of poetic art as ancillary and indifferent. As a general rule, he has not written on religion and mythology, and his rare exceptions were perhaps meant to disavow religious heresy. To attack both society and religion at one time would perhaps have endangered either cause; and probably it was wise on the part of Sámal to have addressed himself to what he felt to be the more important and unoccupied field. In the absence of history, it is difficult to probe through the poet's actual motives. But a poet cannot help singing out his own heart, when he sings for years and years together. And when you can find one continued and sustained burden throughout his many and varied songs, you may safely take it that he has poured out his own heart therein. And it is in this way that we are justified in spelling out the great and free heart of Sámal from his powerful works. To several people his poems have seemed puerile and boorish. But it is difficult to appreciate a poet unless one understands him and his standpoint; and a proper understanding of Sámal is not possible without a preliminary realization of the cardinal points of the great objects that inspired his soul and raised his vision above his time and place. His poetry was concentrated into this focus, and he settled the rest of his details very much with the summary procedures of the *Vril* of "The Coming Race," and of the wand of old Prospero. Not wishing to draw from known mythology, and yet impatient of the tardy procedures of the natural development and evolution of things, Sámal makes effects jump from causes by magical or mythological jerks,

the magic and mythology being in each case some new invention or imitation, likely to fit in with popular associations. This process enables him to kill two birds at a shot. In the first instance he thereby satisfies the innate voracity of the people for supernatural romances. Secondly, he brings out his own social ideals without any delay for development. Thus, for instance, to cite a case already referred to, the fool that was palmed off upon a strong-willed heroine is converted into a man of attainments by a mythological freak, whose invention is not more audacious than that of the *Vrit*. By such methods Sámal secured a market for works which, otherwise, would have been left without a reader in a country where religion has been an all-absorbing somnambulation, while the whole world around has been awake to its secular interests.

The social ideal was only one-half of the aspirations of Sámal. Mercantile adventures of the most enterprizing kinds supply many a poem of his with stirring incidents. The heroes of these poems are young sons of Banyas, whose souls are fired with the desire to travel beyond the now-prohibited seas for gain; and their long absence supplies the poet with occasions to bring in further romances in respect of their wives, who either follow their husbands or are driven to follow them. Numberless domestic idiosyncrasies and errors of the members of joint families, rogueries and rascalities of swindlers and vagabonds who perhaps filled the land in those days, the wisdom and

experience of young people and old as stored up in sayings and adages and anecdotes,—these and many other things which are absolute novelties in the literature of the country are always bristling up throughout the poems of this man, who handles his materials with an originality that wonderfully adapts itself to the local frame of mind and yet aspires to revolutionize its whole constitution. It was only natural that Sámal should not have found followers or admirers in a Brahmanised world; and the communities he had addressed were too illiterate to continue his work. But it is noteworthy that village anecdotes and bardic narrations throughout the rural populations of Northern Gujarat still revel in quoting from, and in imitating, their beloved "Sámal Bhat." And it is also noteworthy that the poets of the generation that is now closing and making room for youngsters with fresh university blood, mostly adopted not only the metres but even the popular style of Sámal's verses, though it must be said that none of these people were ever able to enter even skin-deep into the spirit of his poems.

Akho, Premanand, and Sámal are thus the three leading stars of Gujarati poetry in the seventeenth century, and, as will appear from the history of subsequent centuries, they are the only poets who, throughout the whole history of Gujarati literature, wrote pure and genuine poetry without any substantial subservience to religion. Had peace and prosperity allowed further development to the nation, the lines on which progress had been

commenced by this poetical trio and by the thirty-seven disciples of Premanand would have proved no insignificant factor in giving a very healthy tone to society, and modern Gujarat would have been a country of healthier and truer souls than the masses now are in it. But fortune wished it otherwise. The close of the reign of the Emperor Shah Jehan and the succession of Aurangzebe were events not only baneful in themselves, but they were attended with and followed by the rise of the depredatory hordes of the Marathas, whose advent boded no good to a country of merchants and poets.

The beginning of the eighteenth century was marked by a reign of confusion in Gujarat. The viceroys and commanders of Aurangzebe were neither trusted by their sovereign nor by each other; and, as among themselves the one was set as a spy upon and a destroyer of, the other, they turned Gujarat into their field of battle and intrigue. To confound confusion worse, the various Maratha chieftains followed similar ways in this province, and their desultory and hide-and-seek mode of warfare with each other, and with the disunited Moghul generals, helped to spread an universal conflagration of war and plunder throughout the length and breadth of Gujarat. It was only in 1732, after a continued war of this kind for 30 years and more, that the Gaekwars were able to fix upon Baroda as their capital; but even then the confusions and wars did not cease for several decades. During the first half of this eighteenth century there were several occasions

when the people of Gujarat were called upon to pay the simultaneous blackmail demands of some four Mahratta and two Moghul generals. And even when the nominal supremacy temporarily rested with the one or the other of them, war and plunder was always in prospect. There was the name of peace for the first time in about the middle of the century when the Moghuls were quite driven away, but still the Peishwa and the Gaekwar were ruling side by side and on jealous terms in the country. The Koli and other turbulent tribes did not lose their opportunity of benefiting by this state of things, and it may be said that the whole of this century and a part of the nineteenth were periods of war and plunder throughout the country. Even Baroda afforded no scope for the rise of peaceful arts; for, ever since it became the capital of princes, it also became the centre of intrigue in high quarters and low.

As might have been expected, this state of things put an absolute stop to the growth of any such poetry as the province had witnessed in the previous century. But the flame that had once been kindled did not become quite extinct. It began to burn with an altered hue and lessened force. Pure poetry ceased to be breathed as such, but several new religions found it possible or convenient to grow up during these dark times and took their nourishment from the poetry of bygone ages. The immortal souls of Narasinha and Mira and Premanand and Akho, which had formerly shone like whole planets, were now broken up into numerous

asteroids. These little poets and poetasters crowd upon the horizon and grow thicker in numbers as the eighteenth century draws to a close and the nineteenth dawns.

These poets bear evident traces of inheritance of instincts from the one or the other of the great poets of the previous centuries. But the instincts are in all cases overshadowed by the reasonings and beliefs of one or the other of the numerous religions that were all on a sudden poured upon the country from within and without. On the north of Gujarat is Mewar, the kingdom of Mira's husband. The faith which this lady had adopted, like her contemporary Narasinha Mehta, was the religion of Vishnu, and in her lifetime the royal religion of Mewar was different from hers, and she had to fly to Gujarat to escape both intrigue and persecution. But Mewar was destined to adopt her faith with a vengeance. Vallabhacharya, the founder of the sect which acquired notoriety by the Maharaj libel case at Bombay, was born in 1479, being just the time when both Mira and Narasinha Mehta had closed their careers. Vallabh succeeded in almost displacing from Mewar the older religion of Ekalinga, and he originated, in place of that unrefined and ascetic faith, an epicurean system of beliefs in which the philosophy and poetry which had inspired Narasinha was reduced into a number of scriptural commandments and vows which illiterate devotees gradually accepted in their literal libidinous meanings. Henceforth the allegories of the Chaucer of Gujarat become obsolete and extinct

in religion as well as in poetry. The whole fabric of beliefs now sinks into a mixture of fetichism, idolatry and mythology so far as the unassisted masses are concerned. The poets, though they lose all memory of the old allegories, preserve, however, at times an evergreen symbolism of the Unseen Lord of the Universe in the man-made idol and fill the worshipper with an aspiration to rise from a meditation of the form of the idol to a vision of the Unseen God, and to make his heart-worship of the God-head, held to be specially existing in the idol, expand or transmigrate into love for the mythological hero and then into an abstract love for the abstract deity. This process of the poet is typical, whether he sings of Vishnu or of Siva or of the Mother Goddess. The century in which Akho was hurling his satires against this and other creeds seems to have entirely resisted and kept off the creed and power of Vallabh from Gujarati poetry, if not altogether from Gujarat. But as soon as this century was over and the political anarchy and chaos of the next century placed the country at the mercy of not only political but even religious and moral invaders, the apostles of Vallabh poured into the country, and men and women, mostly Banyas, accepted this new dispensation of madness. Those who would have been poets with sound brains in ordinary times, began to advocate and assist the new creed in this century of moral and political anarchy. Some twelve poets, directly or indirectly attached to this faith, supply the country during this period with an imbecile kind of poetry, where we generally miss the vigour and

philosophy of Narasinha as well as the gentle purity of Mira. The greatest of these poets were the Banya Girdhar and the Brahman Dayaram, and Dayaram is infinitely in advance of Girdhar. Dayaram lived at Dabhoi, and died as late as in 1852 or so. So far as poetical powers are concerned, he is undoubtedly the greatest genius since the days of Premanand. His poems on Krishna and the maids of Gokul are a stream of burning lava of realistic passion and love, and if lewdness of writings do not take away from the merits of a poet, he is a very great poet indeed. He has a weird and fascinating way of bodying forth a host of over-fondled spirits of uncontrollable will in a language which is not only at once popular and poetical, but drags society after him to adopt, as popular, the language he creates for them anew. He introduces the men and women of his country to a luxuriance of metres, whose wild music makes them bear with the flame of his sentiments, and there is a subtle naïveté in everything that comes out from him. He too, no doubt, philosophises and rises to the beautiful and sublime of the Bhakti Márga with equal power, but he is also an open advocate of Vallabh at times, and even the greatest master of advocacy needs must fail in a hopeless cause.

Nature, however, is always pregnant with reactionary movements; and if during the period under consideration there were numerous poets of this epicurean faith, the shades of stoicism did not remain dormant, while even the worship of Vishnu

without a Vallabh was gaining force at Dakor and breathing the Bhakti of the older poets. The shrewd and clever constructers of the Swami Narayan sect, the peaceful and virtuous adorers of the deified and noble hero of the Ramayana, the fanatic worshippers of the ascetic god Siva, the devotees of the mother goddess who got herself enshrined at some mysterious hours in the plains of Chunwal, and on the pinnacles of the romantic Pavagadh near the ruins of Champaner, and of the Arasur in the neighbourhood of the Aboo which had been appropriated for the Jain temples; and finally even the surviving gentle Jains who had mustered thick on the peaks of the Aboo and the Satrunjaya from remoter times: these and several other creeds grew up, like monsoon grass, from within and without the province, spread a vast net-work of temples throughout the country, crushingly overwhelmed all castes and communities, threw the temples of Vishnu into a minority, and, even in the regions of poetry, raised their heads during this period. About four Jain Jatis, ten Sadhus or ascetics of the Swami Narayan sect, six devotees of Rama and four followers of Siva and Máta, tried their lots in the field of poetry with varied fortunes, and would have exceeded in quantity and excelled in quality the poets of Vishnu, if it had not been that this latter class included the powerful Dayaram, the voluminous Girdhar, and a few others who, like the cloth-dyer Ratnó, composed sweet little songs and stirring love-ballads. Nor were the purer systems of philosophical and stoic religions unrepresented. For we have about

fifteen poets who tried to sing the songs of Jnána Màrga, which is a common name for systems which, like the constructive part of Akho's poetry, base themselves on ascetism and purity of heart and discuss the nature of the soul and her position in this world. These poets are erroneously and yet mostly known as Bhaktas; for instance, the Dhiro Bhakta, the Bhojo Bhakta, and so on. One of these, Niránta, got his philosophy even from a Mahomedan. These people represent the various shades of Akho, Kabir and the like; and their poems generally consist of detached and isolated songs. They have their charms and influence in the country; but there are so many influences at work in the land, that since the age of these poets it may properly be said of Gujarat, that confused and confounded man, born to the religious diversities of this province, feels in despair that he must bow in reverence to all Gods and Powers and poets that be, and that personally he must blindly follow his own family religion.

The above picture will speak for itself so far as it can. It is not necessary to repeat here that the poems of these people, though directly religious, derive their materials from ideas and associations of social and domestic matters, and as such often present a real poetical value. Their influence on society, therefore, presents the double aspect of religious and social features. Our knowledge of them would accordingly not be complete, unless we can also cast at least a brief transient glance at the lights and shades they trail behind. If it is interesting and instructive to know how these

poets sang and lived, a consideration of the influence of their works cannot be less so. But in this direction we can only infer and conjecture. For the poets lived among a people who are now dying away, and with whom we, from English schools and colleges, are out of touch when we find them living. Moreover, where religion and poetry have been blended together, how can it be possible to differentiate what the one may have done without the help of the other?

Throughout the period during which the poets have lived, Gujarat has been a conquered province and has had very little to do with politics. People here have, therefore, lived only for economical, social, and religious ends. The province has always yielded a rich harvest of merchants who covered not only the whole of India, but travelled beyond the seas. These children of industry and enterprize are soft and gentle at home, and the poetry of the Vaishnav religion had, by the laws of selection, special charm for them. The Banya community is divided into a majority of Vaishnavs and a minority of Jains. The Vaishnav poetry provided for their minds an intellectual recreation which had nothing harmful about it so long as the amorous Vishnu was left to be sought in the heavens or in the inanimate idol, and not in the tangible and living persons of the much-abused descendants of Vallabhacharya. Those who have sung of the invisible Vishnu alone and of his idol have only helped the cause of women. The temples of Vishnu have, as noted by the author of the "Annals of

Rajasthan," dragged women from their seclusions, and the religion that taught that man as well as woman was but a woman before Hari who was the only owner of the masculine epithet, placed man and woman on the same level. Man sang and danced like woman and in the company of woman; and to suppose that such mixed gatherings were fruitful of immorality is no less a mistake in India than it would be in Europe. The poets who sang of Vishnu in early times simply summoned all people to join in one dance and prayer to Hari, and, in joining so, to abjure all distinctions of caste, rank, and even sex to which the usage of the world had wedded them. So did Queen Mirá invite her royal husband to come and join her in dancing and praying in love and honour to his and her one common Lord.

The impulses to morality under the influence of this poetry were as great as the fascinations it afforded by its constructive powers, by its widest and most practical assertion of human equality, and by the philosophical charms underlying it as its goal. It was unfortunate that the matter passed into the hands of Vallabh. But even he had not the whole victory to himself. His missionaries would have overrun Gujarat earlier, for the work of its first poets had predisposed the country in that direction. But the country was indebted to the three great poets of the seventeenth century for having successfully prevented them from crawling like so many worms on the body social of Gujarat. What the social and moral work of these three poets was need

not be repeated. After they were laid in the dust, numerous religious sects arose in Gujarat, and it was then that the poets had the hardest grapple. The poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have no doubt yielded to the universal deluge and submitted to the one or the other of the new religions. But the propagators and sustainers of the various religions had their frailties and temptations, and it is to the poets who advocated their respective causes that we owe the moral safety of the people. The poet, while accepting his select faith, always looked to his own higher ideal as his guide to his faith, and he brandished his ideal triumphantly before the masses—the masses that followed him in accepting the faith and loved the faith because he made them love it, and they could not be quite divorced from the ideal which made them love the poet and his faith. Nor, on the other hand, was it aught but sheer danger for the leaders of religions to discard their poets; and, *nolens volens*, the heads of sects were bound to come up as far as they could to the ideals which the poets chose to make them represent. It is in this way that the later-day poets contributed to preserve society from unmitigated fetichism and to save the moral safety of both Prophet and People from ruin and anarchy.

Nor is it to be supposed for a moment that the voluptuous song, which we now and then find diversifying the field of poetry, must of necessity make the mind vicious. Much must depend upon the mood in which such matter is read. France

is one of those countries which is charged with having much of vicious literature. When it is sought to infer from this an actually vicious state of the nation, the defence has sometimes been put forward that the people of France do not relish being told stale stories of their own modes of living, but love to read what is novel—what is different from what they daily see and do in life. This defence may or may not be true of France; but in Gujarat the bulk of classical literature professes to be religious, and people look to it neither for a reflection of what they are, nor for an index of what they ought to be. They love the literature because it presents a strange fairy-land tale, and they rightly or wrongly adore it because it is religious. This mood of mind may seem strange, but it exists none the less as a national trait, and our people would call it an idiosyncrasy and a blasphemy to suppose that the life of Krishna or Siva presented in any degree an ideal for human conduct. The divinity of these deities is held to consist in their very departures from human standards of life, and it is the poet who paints these departures as so many divine dreams, and keeps off from the brain of credulously believing society the idea of imitating in practice the wanderings of dreams. It is because poetry has been associated in this way with religion that the songs of Vishnu are not looked upon as a moral code for humanity. Even the Maharajas in Gujarat have not, except in exceptional cases, had the courage to do the one thousand nasty things they are charged with in Bombay, because the voice of the poets is still constantly ringing in the ears of their

worshippers, while at Bombay the poet is hardly known to the Bhattyas who speak a dialect in which no poet ever sung a song. If anywhere the Maharaj is found to be erring, the absence or weakness of the poet's voice and ideal will also be at once detected in the place.

Nor are we to forget that this is only one of the many religions in Gujarat, and that the laws of competition compel the heads of each sect to consult its safety by avoiding disintegration, and that safety is lost where they insult the moral sense of the people. And for the preservation of the moral sense the country is indebted to the competition of religions, as also to those many poets who sang in the stoic ways of Akho and the Bhaktas and yet invested asceticism of the heart with the gentle charms of poetry such as was sung in the Arjun Gita and the like, teaching frail man "to "stick to the world and yet to always keep the mind "in the holy presence of the Lord."

These poets have helped society in other ways also. They have supplied it with intellectual recreation, religious consolation, and moral strength, during a century of political and moral disasters. When village was severed from village by wars and plunders, and when industry and intercommunication were destroyed, the village poet was lighted like a lamp in a gloom of night and he fervidly sang the poetry of moral strength and religious beauty and helped his village community to stand beautifully against its adversities. During happier intervals his poems were carried to other localities which were brightened by the importations.

Women's liberties are larger in Gujarat than perhaps in any other part of India. Probably this is partially owing to the people having been kept at arm's length from their oriental rulers. Women here sing both indoor and outdoor in the higher castes; and, if they are anywhere kept in seclusion, it is in those very castes and localities where poetry is neither sung nor appreciated. The poetesses have invariably belonged to the higher castes, and they have sung in their own ways all the subjects which men-poets have touched. They have lived as wives, as widows, and as *sádhus*, and, in whatsoever position they have sung, men have heard and respected them. And there is also no doubt that many a clever little woman has composed her own sweet song in the name of Mira or some other favourite name of hers, and has enjoyed the interest taken in it by her circle of friends and admirers. In the provinces where the poets of the seventeenth century lived and sang, men have allowed so women, and women have maintained, both indoor and outdoor liberties and influence, except among those land-holding and political classes who have borrowed the practices of the Mahomedan rulers with whom they were in touch. It is the mercantile Banyas and the priestly Brahmans who hear the poets, and it is among them that the woman is free.

The Brahman woman here is not only free, but she maintains her power within her jurisdiction poetically. Thus the lady-poet Divali puts the case of her husband before the royal hero of her poem in a very

popular spirit, and asks him not to laugh at, or look down upon, the wants and wishes of his wife. Gently he is to induce her to open her heart; and, even when he, a great king and man, thinks she talks and wants nonsense, he is to lovingly minister to her desires. For she reasons in Goldsmith's way and thinks that to little women their little things are great. Her hero is thus told that women have an unwritten Sástra of their own which is superior to the six Sástras or philosophies of men, and which neither men nor the Sástras of men can hope to understand. In these matters men are asked to implicitly obey the wishes of women. And this lady Divali was a child-widow, who thanked her parents for having filled and brightened up her blank and bleak career with the pure and noble teachings of Tulsidas. For with such assistance, she says, the little woman Divali went undaunted on the right path where great people of the masculine sex had erred.

We must now conclude. The poets of Gujarat have on the whole, no doubt, had more than enough of religion and religions. But making an allowance for this their inheriting the common colour of the whole nation, we cannot help feeling that they are people "who love, who feel great truths, and tell them" —if by "great" truths we mean truths greater than those which the poets found understood by their countrymen. The mission which poets a philosophers feel within their hearts, is to take t countrymen a step forward,—a step in the line of progress and not a leap from one age to another Or, as a poet has said of his fellows, they "give

nobler loves and nobler cares," not noblest loves and noblest cares, which latter no one, with any pretension to philosophic freedom from conceit, can ever predicate of any present thing in this age of progressive expectations. And, judging by this standard, what native of Gujarat will not say that his poets have not made a gift of higher loves and cares to his countrymen? There may be higher and nobler things present in the world surrounding us, or in prospect in the coming age, than what these poets have taught; and if they are so present or so in prospect, we shall have them and shall rise to them. But the fact remains that these poets took their society at least a step higher than where it would have been without them. But for these poets the people of Gujarat would have long since been turned into decayed and shrunken things; and if there is life left in them, the life-drops have been supplied by the poets. The poets have in fact wielded their power among the masses in this province and enriched them at a time when there were no other educationists in the land, and it is upon the basis of the society as saved or raised by them that modern educationists and writers have to construct their superstructure if they ever think of reaching the otherwise unwieldy masses. Here is ample matter for study and suggestion—a gain of no mean character.

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